March 2013

The Effects of Body Language and Affiliative Motivation on Social Tuning and Likeability

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Abstract

Past research shows that affiliative motivation predicts the likelihood of social tuning (or the alignment of one's views with those of an interaction partner; Sinclair, Huntsinger, Skorinko, & Hardin, 2005a). However, this research has not examined whether an interaction partner's nonverbal cues (or body language) also influences social tuning. The current experiment examines whether affiliative motivation and body language influence social tuning. Eighty-three participants were led to believe they would interact with their partner for either 5 minutes or 30 minutes (affiliative motivation manipulation). Participants also saw a Polaroid photo of their ostensible partner. This picture either depicted open or closed body language (body language manipulation). Results show a main effect of body language on likeability such that participants rated their ostensible partner as more likeable when displaying closed body language. Thus the findings are contrary to previous research stating that open body language is seen as more likeable.

The Effects of Body Language and Affiliative Motivation on Social Tuning and Likeability

An individual's desire to get along with someone and an interaction partner's body language can effect social interactions. Affiliative motivation is defined as the desire to get along with another to create, preserve, or re-establish positive relations. Examples of this behavior include, acting in a pleasant manner, connecting with another person through similarities, or aligning one's attitudes to match another's (referred to as social tuning; Sinclair, Huntsinger, Skorinko, & Hardin, 2005a; Sinclair, Hardin, Lowery, & Colangelo, 2005b; Smith, 1992). Another factor that can influence social interactions are the nonverbal cues that an interaction partner conveys through their body language during an interaction. One's body language can subtly convey an individual's attitudes on a topic or towards the interaction (Hargrave, 2008). Past research shows that affiliative motivation can influence social tuning. However, it is unclear what role a partner's body language plays in the social tuning process. An interactions partner's body language is an important factor to consider because it could potentially trump the effects that affiliative motivation have on the social tuning process. For instance, if an individual has high affiliative motivation to get along with their partner, but their partner conveys through their body language that they are not interested in the interaction, then this may limit the likelihood that social tuning would occur as it may inadvertently dampen the affiliative goals. The present research seeks to understand the effects that affiliative motivation and body language have on social tuning and likeability of an interaction partner.

Social Tuning and Affiliative Motivation

Social tuning occurs when an individual alters their attitudes to match another's during a social interaction (Davis & Rusbult, 2001; McCann & Hancock, 1983; McCann & Higgins, 1990; Sinclair et al., 2005a). Individuals are likely to engage in social tuning by adopting similar

attitudes as their interaction partner in order to create a 'shared reality' with their partner in order to have a harmonious interaction (Sinclair et al., 2005a; Sinclair et al., 2005b; Shah & Gardner, 2008). One key factor that influences the likelihood of engaging in social tuning is affiliative motivation (Sinclair, et al., 2005a; Sinclair, et al., 2005b). Affiliative motivation greatly influences human behavior because it allows individuals to feel a sense of belonging with others, it helps reduce negative feelings by providing the sense of having emotional support, and it can boost positive feelings from increased attention and praise received from others (Hill, 1987). However, the amount of affiliative motivation varies situation to situation and person to person. For instance, an interviewee may experience more affiliative motivation than an interviewer in an interview situation. Looking specifically at research examining the effects of affiliative motivation on social tuning, this research shows that individuals who have a higher level of affiliative motivation are more likely to social tune than those who have a lower level of affiliative motivation. For instance, in one study, female participants who learned that their partner liked gender traditional women, were more likely to social tune and describe themselves as traditional when they had high affiliative motivation than when they had low affiliative motivation (Sinclair, et al., 2005a).

Research also shows that affiliative motivation can influence the social tuning of both explicit and implicit attitudes. Explicit attitudes are those which individuals are aware of, and implicit attitudes are those that are not consciously present (Shah & Gardner, 2008; Ajzen, Albarracin, Dolores & Hornik, 2007). For example, research has found that when participants experience high affiliative motivation they are more likely to socially tune their implicit racial attitudes to match those of an ostensible partner than when they experience low affiliative motivation (Sinclair et al., 2005b).

Body Language

Another factor that influences social interactions is an individual's body language. Body language can include "posture, gait, eye movements, gestures, feet, legs, torso, arms, hands, head, facial expressions, and mannerisms" (Hargrave, 2008, p.17). Research shows that 65 percent of our communication is nonverbal (Hargrave, 2008). Thus, the nonverbal cues accentuated through body language plays an important role in social interactions. Specific body positions can communicate an individual's emotional state. For example, if an individual has upward facing palms, this conveys feelings of openness. However, if an individual hides their palms or turns them downwards, then this expresses feelings of being closed-off (Pease & Pease, 2006). Another example of how an individual communicates their emotional state is through the positioning of their arms. Past research demonstrates that people interpret crossed arms as portraying negative emotions more so than those with arms not crossed (Pease & Pease, 2006). Specifically, the researchers found that crossed arms indicated an individual's desire to avoid social interactions.

In social interactions, these body positions can influence how likeable an individual appears to be to others. And, in fact, research suggests that the openness of one's body language affects how likeable an individual appears to be (Borgomaneri, Gazzola, & Avenanti, 2012). In addition, research also shows that individuals will subconsciously mimic different nonverbal behaviors of their interaction partner, and it is argued that this mimicry occurs as an unconscious attempt to increase likeability and facilitate a smoother interaction (Chartrand & Bargh, 1999). However, it is unclear whether an interaction partner's body language influences the likelihood that one will engage in social tuning.

Present Research

In sum, the past research shows that affiliative motivation plays a key role in the social tuning process. Research also shows that the nonverbal cues given off by one's body language also effect social interactions, as well as the extent to which an interaction partner is liked (Hargrave, 2008). For instance, an individual who exhibits more open body language (e.g., arms open by one's side) is perceived as more likeable than an individual who exhibits more closed body language (e.g., arms crossed over one's chest; Borgomaneri, Gazzola, & Avenanti, 2012). Thus, an important and unanswered question is whether the effects of affiliative motivation on social tuning may be heightened (or limited) by the body language exhibited by an interaction partner. The present research aims to examine this question by manipulating the level of affiliative motivation and the openness of a interaction partner's body language and measuring the extent to which individuals align their implicit and explicit attitudes with those of their interaction partners. We are also interested in whether affiliative motivation and body language influence perceptions of likeability of the partner. We hypothesize that there will be an interaction between affiliative motivation and body language on social tuning and also likeability. More specifically, we predict that those with high affiliative motivation and an interaction partner who exhibits open body language should be the most likely to engage in social tuning.

Method

Participants

There were a total of 83 participants that completed the experiment (51 Males; 32 Females). Participants completed the experiment for partial course credit or were entered in a

raffle for a gift card (either $10 or $5). All participants gave informed consent, and no participants were excluded prior to the experiment.

Design

This experiment was a 2 (body language: closed position, open position) x 2 (affiliative motivation: 5 minutes, 30 minutes) between-participants design. To manipulate body language, we took photographs of two male models (both Caucasian and brown haired) that depicted either closed off body language (arms crossed over chest, balled up their hands into fists, and stood straight up,) or open body language (stood in a relaxed position with their arms by their sides and the palms open. See Appendix A for the pictures of the models. To manipulate affiliative motivation, participants learn that they will be interacting with their ostensible partner for either 5 or 30 minutes. To manipulate the perceived views of the interaction partner, the participant always learned that their ostensible partner held egalitarian attitudes towards homosexuals. The dependent variable of this study is social tuning. We measured social tuning by examining how egalitarian participant's explicit and implicit attitudes towards homosexuals were after learning about their partner's egalitarian attitudes. In addition to social tuning, we assessed the likeability of the ostensible partner.

Materials

Affiliative Motivation. We randomly assigned participants to two different affiliative motivation conditions. Based on past research (Sinclair, et al., 2005a), we led the participants to believe they were going to interact with an ostensible partner for either 5 or 30 minutes (Sinclair et al., 2005a). Participants who are led to believe they will interact for 30 minutes should experience more affiliative motivation than participants believing their interaction will last for 5 minutes.

Body Language of the Partner. We manipulated the ostensible partner's body language by photographing two male models that depicted either open or closed body language (Appendix A). To demonstrate closed body language, the models crossed their arms, balled up their hands into fists, and stood straight up (Pease & Pease, 2006). To demonstrate open body language, models stood in a relaxed position with their arms by their sides and the palms open (Pease & Pease, 2006). Each model also wore similar clothing, consisting of a plain white t-shirt and light colored blue jeans.

Gender of the Ostensible Partner. To simplify the design of this study, participants always believed they were interacting with a male partner.

Perceived Views of the Ostensible Partner. We told participants they were viewing the score that their ostensible partner earned on the Attitudes towards Homosexuals scale. From these "results", participants always learned that their "partner" held favorable views towards homosexuals.

Attitudes Towards Lesbians and Gays Measure. To measure explicit attitudes towards homosexuals, we used the Attitudes Towards Lesbians and Gays Scale (ATLG; Herek, 1998) (Appendix B). Out of a total of 20 statements, 10 statements are about gay men and 10 statements are about lesbian women. Examples of statements from this scale are: "I would not be too upset to learn that my son was a homosexual," or "The growing number of lesbians indicates a decline in American morals." A 5 point Likert-Type scale measured the level of agreement with each of these statements ("1 = strongly disagree" and "5 = strongly agree").

Religiosity Measure. This scale was used to determine if an individual's religious beliefs correlated with their attitudes towards homosexuals. We used the Post-Critical Belief scale (Duriez, Fontaine & Hutsebaut, 2000) to assess the participant's attitudes towards religion

(Appendix C). This scale specifically measured religiosity and whether individuals interpret religion literally or symbolically. Examples of statements from this scale are, "The Bible is a guide, full of signs in search for God, and not a historical account", "I think that the Bible stories should be taken literally, as they are written", "God is only a name for the inexplicable", and "Only a priest can give an answer to important religious questions" (Duriez et al., 2000). This scale used a 7-point Likert-Type scale with 1 indicating, "strongly disagree" and 7 indicating "strongly agree."

Implicit Association Test. The Implicit Association Test (IAT) is a computer task involving rapid response to stimuli (Nosek, Greenwald & Banaji, 2005). Participants were expected to categorize words as either *good* or *bad* (e.g. "heaven" = *good* and "stinky" = *bad*). Following this, participants categorized pictures of couples as either *homosexual* or *heterosexual*. After completing these trials independently, participants were asked to make categorizations that paired the good/bad and homosexual/heterosexual concepts together. For instance, participants would need to categorize a word or picture as being good/homosexual or bad/heterosexual. The order of these combined pairings was counterbalanced. The recommended algorithm for computing the d-score was then administered to the reaction times (Nosek, Greenwald & Banaji, 2005). A higher positive number indicates more implicit prejudice towards homosexuals.

Likeability Measure. The Reysen likeability scale (Reysen, 2005) assesses how likeable the participant believes another person is. In this case, we were measuring the likeability of the ostensible partner (Appendix D). This scale includes statements like, "This person is friendly," and "I would ask this person for advice." The participant records their response on a 7-point Likert-Type scale, with "1" indicating "very strongly disagree" and a "7" indicating "very strongly agree."

Procedure

After being greeted by the experimenter, participants provided informed consent. Participants then learned that they would be interacting with a partner for either 5 or 30 minutes (affiliative motivation manipulation). They also learned that they would complete a series of tasks and questionnaires before the ostensible interaction. After the cover story, but prior to the tasks, participants stood in front of a white background to have their picture taken with a Polaroid camera. Participants believed that their picture would be shown to their ostensible interaction partner. A second experimenter knocked on the door and the two experimenters exchanged photos. Participants examined their ostensible interaction partner's photo closely and verbally indicated if they had ever seen or met their partner before. Half the participants saw a picture of the ostensible partner that depicted closed body language (crossed arms, balled up hands into fists, and standing up straight), and the remaining half saw a picture that depicted open body language (standing in a relaxed position, with arms by the sides and open palms).

After reviewing the photograph, participants sat at a computer for their first task. They learned that the computer would randomly select a scale for them to complete. Participants were always "randomly selected" to complete the Need for Cognition Scale (Cacioppo, Richard Petty & Kao, 1984). After completing the Need for Cognition Scale, participants learned that their score would be sent to their partner and that they would learn, via the computer scale, what scale their partner completed and their score. Participants always learned that their partner completed an 'Attitudes towards Gay Rights scale', and the score revealed that the partner held very egalitarian and pro-gay rights attitudes.

After reviewing their partner's score, participants completed an implicit association test (IAT; Nosek, Greenwald & Banaji, 2005) that measured their implicit prejudice towards

homosexuals. Participants also completed the Attitudes towards Lesbians and Gays scale (ATLG; Herek, 1998) to measure their explicit attitudes towards homosexuals. Afterwards participants took the Post Critical Belief scale (Duriez, Fontaine & Hutsebaut, 2000). Following this, participants completed the Reysen likeability scale (Reysen, 2005). The experimenter notified the participant that there will be no interaction. Then after providing demographic information, participants were debriefed and thanked.

Results

We used a 2-way Analysis of Variance (ANOVA) with affiliative motivation and body language as the between-participants factors to analyze the results. We assessed the effects of these factors on implicit attitudes towards homosexuals, explicit attitudes towards homosexuals, likeability, and religiosity. Exploratory analyses revealed that neither participant gender nor ethnicity significantly influenced the results. Since we were interested in heterosexuals' attitudes towards homosexuals, we excluded the three homosexual participants from these analyses. The final dataset has a total of 80 participants. There were no outliers in this dataset.

Implicit Attitudes Towards Homosexuals

There was no main effect for body language on implicit attitudes towards homosexuals, F (1, 79) = 1.32, p = .25. There was no main effect for affiliative motivation on implicit attitudes, F (1, 79) = 1.35, p = .25. There was also no significant interaction between body language and affiliative motivation on implicit attitudes, F (1, 79) = .22, p = .64. Thus, for implicit attitudes, neither affiliative motivation nor body language affected social tuning.

Explicit Attitudes Towards Homosexuals

There was no main effect for body language on explicit attitudes, F (1, 79) = .00, p = 1.00. There was no main effect for affiliative motivation on explicit attitudes, F (1, 79) = .14, p = .71.

There was also no significant interaction between body language and affiliative motivation on explicit attitudes, F (1, 79) = .45, p= .50. Neither affiliative motivation nor body language affected the social tuning of explicit attitudes.

Likeability

There was no main effect for affiliative motivation on likeability, F (1, 79) = .4, p = .53. There was, however, a main effect for body language on likeability, F (1, 79) = 7.80, p = .01. More specifically, contrary to our predictions, participants rated the ostensible partner portraying closed body language as more likeable than the ostensible partner portraying open body language (see Table 1 for means and standard deviations). There was no significant interaction between body language and affiliative motivation on likeability, F (1, 79) = .12, p = .73.

Religiosity

There was no main effect for body language on religiosity, F (1, 79) = .24, p = .62. There was no main effect for affiliative motivation on religiosity, F (1, 79) = .10, p = .75. There was no significant interaction between body language and affiliative motivation on religiosity, F (1, 79) = .22, p = .64. Thus, affiliative motivation and body language had no influence on an individual's religiosity. We also examined the correlation between participants' explicit attitudes towards homosexuals and their religiosity. There was a weak negative correlation, correlated r (79) = -.24, $p < .05$, such that the more prejudiced towards homosexuals, the less religious the person.

Discussion

Overall, the results show that there were no significant effects of body language or affiliative motivation on social tuning of implicit or explicit attitudes towards homosexuals. This finding contradicts past research that has found that affiliative motivation increases the

likelihood of social tuning on both types of attitudes (Sinclair et al., 2005a; Sinclair et al., 2005b). In terms of likeability, the findings show ostensible partners with closed body language were more likeable than ostensible partners with open body language. This finding is also contrary to previous research. Borgomaneri, Gazzola & Avenanti, (2012) found that open body language increased likeability more than closed body language.

For exploratory purposes, we examined the trends in the pattern of means of likeability based on affiliative motivation and body language. We see that, while not significant, the means indicate that people are seen as more likeable when displaying closed body language and when affiliative motivation is high. This trend also indicates that individuals are perceived as being the least likeable when displaying open body language and when affiliative motivation is low. It would be beneficial for future research to further explore these findings to see why closed body language is having such positive effects on likeability.

One possible explanation for this trend in the data and for the finding that people liked those with closed body language over those with open body language is that the gender of the model played a role. Thus, a limitation of the current research is that the gender of the model was held constant (male). While this was done to simplify the design of the current study, past research on gender does show that there is a significant difference in the perception of men's and women's closed body language (Olson, 1999). One of the main findings from this study was that men's closed body language was considered to be more dominant than women's closed body language, when rated by male participants (Olson, 1999). This sense of dominance that is accentuated by closed body language in males may be an underlying factor contributing to our finding that participants liked the model with closed body language more than the one with open body language. Thus, future research should investigate whether the gender of the ostensible

interaction partner has an effect on likeability and social tuning. In addition, future research should consider the role of dominance and gender in body language. It is possible that closed body language is considered more traditionally masculine and this too could be an underlying reason why participants liked when the model displayed closed body language more than when the model displayed open body language.

Another area that could be explored in future studies is mimicry and how it can be influenced by affiliative motivation. Chartrand and Bargh found that people often mimic others body language in order to increase likeability, which could allow for a smoother interaction to occur (Chartrand & Bargh, 1999). There has been limited research on mimicry and its connection to affiliative motivation in social interactions. Therefore, future research could examine if individuals imitate their interaction partner's closed and open body language when a high level of affiliative motivation is present in order to increase likeability.

Future research may also explore the race of the ostensible partners to see if that has an effect on social tuning and likeability. In the current study, the race of the partner was held constant to be Caucasian. This was done because the past research on social tuning typically uses a Caucasian partner, and also because past research shows that the race of the target matters (e.g., see McConnell & Leibold, 2001). More specifically, in this study Caucasian participants showed increased prejudice towards blacks on both explicit and implicit attitude scales when the target was Black (McConnell & Leibold, 2001). Thus, one area for future exploration in the social tuning and likeability literature is to further examine the effects that the race of the interaction partner has on these outcomes. For instance, it is unclear whether the effects of affiliative motivation (or even body language) will be the same when an interaction partner is ethnically different than the participant.

In conclusion, our results contradicted previous research and our hypotheses. A possible explanation of our results could be that individuals want to affiliate more with those of authority (McCann & Hancock, 1983). Since authority figures are often respected by others and are associated with dominance, this could motivate participants to like these individuals more than those expressing open body language (McCann & Hancock, 1983). Another explanation for the increase in likeability is the implicit gender stereotype that men are perceived as more hierarchical than women (Mast, 2004). Since men are perceived as more hierarchical, they are stereotyped as appearing more dominant than women (Olson, 1999). Therefore, the closed body language that was portrayed by the ostensible partner could be a subtle cue that confirms stereotypes of traditionally masculine men, and this may have helped increase likeability and may have inadvertently influenced the attitudes towards homosexuals as well. Thus, while the current research is inconclusive in regards to the effects of affiliative motivation and body language on social tuning and likeability, our research highlights the need to further explore the effects these factors have in social interactions.

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Tables

Table 1

Means and Standard Deviations of The Effects Of Body Language And Affiliative Motivation on Likeability of the Ostensible Partner.

Condition	***M***	***SD***	***N***	***F***	***p***
Body Language					
Open	*4.29*	.58	41	7.73	.01*
Closed	*4.68*	.68	40		
Affiliative Motivation					
Low	4.40	.64	39	1.00	.32
High	4.55	.70	42		
Body Language * Affiliative Motivation					
Open/Low	4.24	.69	19	7.80	.01*
Open/High	4.32	.48	22		
Closed/Low	4.55	.54	20		
Closed/High	4.80	.80	20		

*** indicates p > .05**

Figures

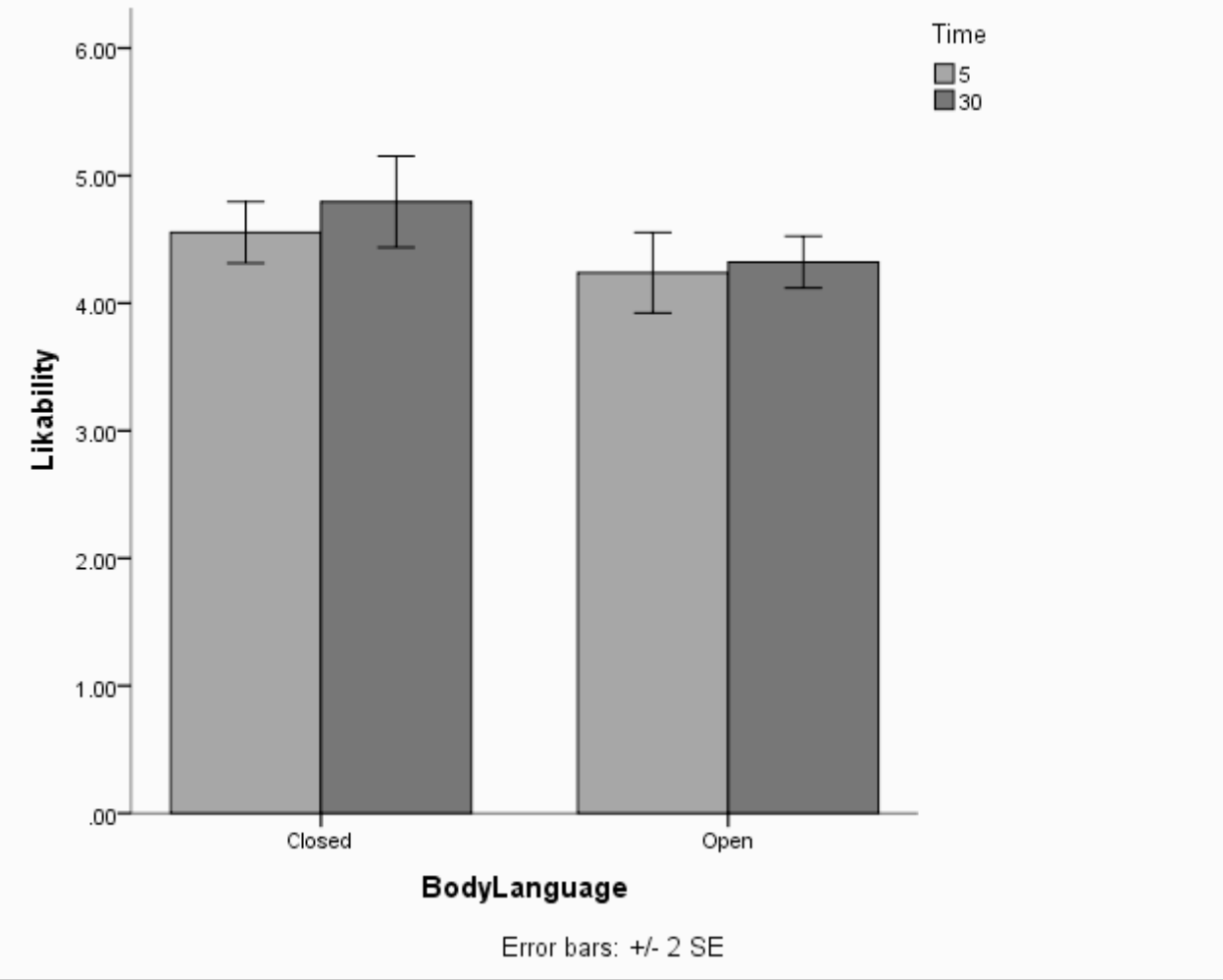
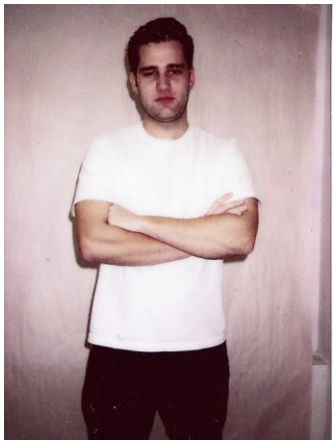


Figure 1. The Effects of Body Language on Perceived Likeability of the Partner.

AppendixA
Ostensible Interaction Partner's Pictures

Pictures of two male models were used. They depict either open or closed body language.

Open Body Language: The male model depicts a relaxed posture. His arms aren't crossed, and his palms are showing.



Closed Body Language: The male model depicts a closed off posture. His arms are crossed, with one arm showing a fist.

Appendix B

Attitudes Towards Lesbians and Gays Scale.

Using the scale, for each prompt, please indicate whether you agree or disagree with the following statements by choosing a number and hitting enter.

1----------5
Strongly Disagree Strongly Agree

1 "Male homosexual couples should be allowed to adopt children the same as heterosexual couples."
2 "I think male homosexuals are disgusting."
3 "Male homosexuals should not be allowed to teach school."
4 "Male sexuality is a perversion."
5 "Just as in other species, male homosexuality is a natural expression of sexuality in human men."
6 "If a man has homosexual feelings, he should do everything he can to overcome them."
7 "I would not be too upset learned that my son was a homosexual."
8 "Homosexual behavior between two men is just plain wrong."
9 "The idea of male homosexual marriages seems ridiculous to me."
10 "Male homosexuality is merely a different kind of lifestyle that should not be."
11 "Lesbians just can't fit into our society."
12 "A woman's homosexuality should not be a cause for job discrimination in any situation."
13 "Female sexuality is detrimental to society because it breaks down natural divisions between the sexes."
14 "State laws regulating private, consenting lesbian behavior should be loosened."
15 "The growing number of lesbians indicates a decline in American morals."
16 "Female homosexuality is a sin."
17 "Female homosexuality in itself is no problem, but what society makes of it can be a problem."
18 "Female homosexuality is a threat to many of our basic social institutions."
19 "Female homosexuality is an inferior form of sexuality."
20 "Lesbians are sick."

Appendix C
The Post-Critical Belief Scale

You will find a couple of statements related to the way in which people approach faith and religion. Please indicate your level of agreement by choosing a number and hitting enter.

1----------7
Strongly Disagree Strongly Agree

1 "The Bible holds a deeper truth, which can only be revealed by personal reflection."
2 "If you want to understand the meaning of the miracle stories from the Bible, you should always place them in their historical context."
3 "You can only live a meaningful life if you believe."
4 "God has been defined for once and for all and therefore is immutable."
5 "Faith is more of a dream, which turns out to be an illusion when one is confronted with the harshness of life."
6 "The Bible is a guide, full of signs in the search for God, and not a historical account."
7 "Even though this goes against modern rationality, I believe Mary truly was a virgin when she gave birth to Jesus."
8 "Too many people have been oppressed in the name of God in order to still be able to have faith."
9 "Each statement about God is a result of the time in which it is made."
10 "Despite the fact that the Bible was written in a completely different historical context from ours, it retains a basic message."
11 "Only the major religious traditions guarantee admittance to God."
12 "Because Jesus is mainly a guiding principle for me, my faith in him would not be affected if it would appear that he never actually existed as a historical individual."
13 "Ultimately, religion means commitment without absolute guarantee."
14 "Religion is the one thing that gives meaning to life in all its aspects."
15 "The manner, in which humans experience their relationship to God, will always be colored by the times they live in."
16 The historical accuracy of the stories from the Bible is irrelevant for my faith in God."
17 Ultimately, there is only one correct answer to each religious question."
18 "God is only a name for the inexplicable."
19 "Official Church doctrine and other statements about the absolute will always remain relative because they are pronounced by human beings at a certain period of time."
20 "The world of Bible stories is so far removed from us, that it is has little relevance."
21 "Only a priest can give an answer to important religious questions."
22 "A scientific understanding of human life and the world has made a religious understanding superfluous."
23 "God grows together with the history of humanity and therefore is changeable."
24 "I am well aware that my beliefs are only one possibility among so many others."

25 "I think that Bible stories should be taken literally, as they are written."
26 "Despite the high number of injustices Christianity has caused people, the original message of Christ is still valuable to me."
27 "In the end, faith is nothing more than a safety net for human fears."
28 "Secular and religious conceptions of the world give valuable answers to important questions about life."
29 "In order to fully understand what religion is all about, you have to be an outsider."
30 "Faith is an expression of a weak personality."
31 "There is no absolute meaning in life, only giving directions, which is different for every one of us."
32 "Religious faith often is an instrument for obtaining power, and that makes it suspect."
33 "I still call myself a Christian, even though a lot of things that I cannot agree with have happened in the past in name of Christianity."

Appendix D
The Reysen Likeability Scale

We now have some questions about your expectations about the upcoming interaction. Using the following scale, please indicate the degree to which you agree or disagree with the following statements.

1----------4----------7
Very Strongly Disagree Neutral Very Strongly Agree

1 "This person is friendly."
2 "This person is likeable."
3 "This person is warm."
4 "This person is approachable."
5 "I would ask this person for advice."
6 "I would like this person as a coworker."
7 "I would like this person as a roommate."
8 "I would like to be friends with this person."
9 "This person is physically attractive."
10 "This person is similar to me."
11 "This person is knowledgeable."